Ministers officially open the new Hospital

“I particularly thank members of the local community whom I first met nearly 20 years ago when they were campaigning with then Member for Ballina Don Page to secure the new hospital.

“Byron Central Hospital is testament to their persistence and determination to secure the facility the local community needs.”

Byron Central Hospital will be fully functioning soon. Meanwhile, services continue as normal at the current hospitals and community health centres. Update information at http://nnswhd.health.nsw.gov.au/about/hospitals/byron-central-hospital-development/

The Ministers were joined by state colleagues Chris Gulaptis, MP for Clarence and Parliamentary Secretary for the North Coast, and Ben Franklin MLC, as well as senior staff from NNSW Local Health District and community members.

“Hospital and ambulatory care patients will both be able to access expanded clinical and integrated services under one roof,” Minister Skinner said, following a walk-through of the hospital.

“I thank the project team and Byron’s dedicated health professionals for delivering this long-awaited hospital to the community.
Inpatient unit a highlight of Byron Central Hospital

Along with the provision of 24/7 emergency care, inpatient beds are usually considered the core business of any public hospital, and it is no different at Byron Central Hospital (BCH), even though ambulatory care (community and allied health) services are now under the same roof.

The overnight rooms at BCH are a significant advance on those available at Mullumbimby and Byron Bay hospitals, said experienced Nurse Unit Manager Tracey Brooke (pictured), who has worked previously at Mullumbimby and Byron Bay hospitals, as well as a Clinical Nurse Specialist in orthopaedics at Lismore Base Hospital.

While significant extra capacity (a total of 43 beds) has been built in for the future, current demand is not expected to be that high. Most of these are in single rooms, a key advance on how hospital beds were configured in the past: gone are the multiple bed wards that were the bane of patients and visitors.

Eight of the unit’s beds are fitted with cardiac monitoring which assists nursing staff in ensuring a high level of quality and safety is provided to patients.

Other notable improvements in the purpose-built hospital include a special room for bariatric (weighty) and immobile patients.

The powered bed (pictured above right) is supported by a lifting frame with an overhead rail connecting to the en-suite bathroom. This enables nursing staff to easily move a patient to the toilet or shower with minimum exertion on either behalf.

There are two special rooms for cognitively impaired patients (visual or aural), to ensure maximum safety and convenience. One feature is the ‘blue loo’ colour for the toilet seats, rather than the standard white, to help the sight impaired.

“Another key feature of the unit is the negative pressure room, to ensure the containment of highly infectious diseases such as whooping cough or illnesses that travellers might pick up overseas,” Tracey Brooke said.

The unit is located close to the Emergency Department, rated at Level 3, higher than the previous Shire hospitals. This means more seriously ill patients can be treated, and accommodated.

Importantly, there is ready access to diagnostic technologies such as the CT scanner and Ultrasound. Previously, Byron Shire patients needed to be transport to the Tweed Hospital to access such services.

Like the rest of BCH, the inpatient rooms are naturally well lit by day, but fully screened off from night light by special double blinds.

“This is despite the relative proximity to Ewingsdale Road, which has really surprised visitors,” Tracey added. So has the complete absence of road noise thanks to the double-glazed window glass.”
Each bed has ready access to the required range of medical gases, with both call and alarm systems that immediately show up on master screens at the nursing station and overhead screens in the corridors. These display the room and bed numbers and the time the call was lodged.

The unit has a patient dining room and sitting area, both with expansive outside views, a treatment room with a simulated ‘patient’ for ongoing staff training, and an occupational therapy (OT) kitchen where patients can be assessed, and assisted, for discharge back to their home environment.

Discharge planning is a weekly process involving a full multidisciplinary team of medical and nursing staff, OTs, physio and other healthcare professionals. The principle is that returning people safely to the community after a hospital stay is just as important as ensuring they receive expert and timely care when they arrive.

Hospitals are violence-free zones

Like all hospitals in NSW, Byron Central Hospital has a no-tolerance policy regarding physical or verbal aggression towards staff, other patients and visitors.

When to use the ED…

NSW hospital emergency departments (EDs) are open 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year, and provide free care to all members of the public who come in.

However, it is important to remember that EDs can be very busy places, with a wide range of conditions needing to be assessed by medical staff, and treated in accordance with their urgency.

If you are seriously hurt or really sick, you should always go as quickly as possible to your nearest hospital’s ED for treatment. You don’t need to make an appointment.

If you are in doubt about the seriousness of your problem you may contact healthdirect on 1800 022 222 to get free advice from a registered nurse.

Minor illness or injury is best treated by a GP or after hours Medical Centre.

Thanks for all your support

The Management and Staff of Mullumbimby & District War Memorial Hospital, Byron District Hospital, and Byron Shire’s Community Health centres wish to express their appreciation for the strong community support during the development phase of the new Byron Central Hospital.

We know this wonderful facility will be a healthcare hub of the Byron Shire community for many years to come.
Arts program continues to expand

It is well accepted that a visually pleasing environment is beneficial for our health, and patients and visitors will enjoy how the arts program is a major focus of the new hospital’s fit-out.

Highlights include Hobie Porter’s stunning oil painting ‘Bush Healing’ of the melaleuca lake at Tyagarah that was gouged out by sand mining in the 1960s. Plants used as traditional medicine are one feature of the work.

Rachel Stone has painted murals for the children’s play areas in emergency and reception, and the physio gym, while the suspended mobile ‘Sea Glass’ hangs in the naturally lit stairway between the ground and lower ground floors.

Prior to hanging, the assembled pieces of ‘Sea Glass’ are checked by artists Virginia Reid (left) and Nicky McLaughlin.

Below: ‘Sea Glass’ catches the light behind the Director of Tweed Byron Health Service Group, Bernadette Loughnane.

Local artist Hobie Porter with ‘Bush Healing’, his spectacular painting of the Tyagarah wetland that graces the hospital’s entry foyer.

Below: the Zen garden adjacent to the hospital entrance.
Brookfield Multiplex says thanks to BCH sub-contractors

In mid-May, the contracted builders for Byron Central Hospital, Brookfield Multiplex Australasia, conducted a tour for the directors and principals of the companies sub-contracted to work on the project.

This was the last opportunity for them to inspect the excellent work done by their own staff, and those from the other 92 companies that had been engaged.

Also attending were project manager Savills Australia, and the NSW Government body Health Infrastructure.

Later, a presentation ceremony was held, with the peak award, “Outperformance Sub-Contractor”, going to the Star Group, and Best New Sub-Contractor to MK Floors.

Brookfield Multiplex’s Stuart Clark briefing some of the sub-contractors’ group in the ED. Below: Three cheers for a job well done… BCH sub-contractor directors and principals visiting the completed project.

Gary Biggs from MK Floors is congratulated by Health Infrastructure’s Jeff Arthur, and Daniel Murphy, regional director, Brookfield Multiplex.

Brookfield Multiplex’s project manager Stuart Clark said a project of this scale would normally take around 18 months to build, whereas BCH was completed in a little over a year, despite 32 days of inclement weather.

Importantly, this fast-tracking had been achieved without any compromise on quality. A total of 2,900 workers had been engaged, with a peak of 220 at any one time, and an average of 170. Yet there were no reportable incidents to Worksafe NSW.

The Aboriginal component of the workforce had been an excellent 8.5%, with a number of those staff going on to attain permanent employment or apprenticeships.

Awards included Aboriginal Trainee of the Year 2015, with the winner Sean Kay, a local Bundjalung man, also designing the site work shirt. Sale of the shirt resulted in $5,000 being donated to the local Arakwal Corporation.

Positive engagement with the community was a key feature of the project, with visits from Byron Community Primary School students, and a site-related art competition with bikes as prizes. The students also raised $1,300 for the Byron Hospital Auxiliary.

Other fundraising highlights were a sub-contractors’ charity golf day, which raised $18,500 for the Auxiliary, and an outstanding $40,000 raised by the plumber site manager who shed his dreadlocks to benefit the area-wide Our Kids paediatric charity at Lismore Base Hospital.

“Along with building a much-needed, state of the art hospital, we have left a positive and lasting legacy in the community,” Stuart Clark said.